



**CITY OF DANBURY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROGRAM  
& PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
2002**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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- I. TRENDS & FORECASTS**
- II. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES & VALUES**
- III. PLANNING STUDIES**
- IV. PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**
- V. ACTION PLAN**

*The Danbury Department of Planning and Zoning has copies available of the Comprehensive Planning Program and the Plan of Conservation and Development. For information, contact the Department at 155 Deer Hill Avenue, Danbury, Connecticut 06810. (203) 797-4525.*

*Comprehensive Planning Program (includes the Plan) - \$ 30  
Plan of Conservation and Development - \$ 10*

The Plan of Conservation and Development represents a major departure from past efforts to plan for the future of the City, for although Plans of Development were adopted in 1958, and later updated in 1967 and 1980, they never played the vital role that was expected of them. Priorities were rarely set among recommended actions and the specific steps necessary to reach their objectives were never fully explored, as though the plans could implement themselves. While they may have pointed the City in a general direction, the road maps were missing.

This effort is designed to overcome these deficiencies by integrating a new Plan of Conservation and Development into a broader Comprehensive Planning Program, a program that emphasizes strategies as well as goals, process as well as product.

This approach is needed now more than ever before. Over the past 20 years, the population of Danbury has increased by over 24 percent, the number of housing units has climbed by 28 percent, and jobs have soared by 50 percent. The decline of manufacturing and the emergence of Danbury as a corporate office and retail center have changed the complexion of the City and its physical form. The mix of racial and ethnic groups has become richer and the sound of forty-five different languages can now be heard within City schools and on City streets.

Though all of these changes are indicative of a vibrant community, they brought with them an ever-increasing array of growth related problems: traffic congestion, escalating housing costs, expanding service demands, and a continuing loss of open space. Clearly, a new plan was needed to address these immediate concerns as well as to set a direction for the future. But changes in administrative processes were also required to avoid the failings of the past. Plan implementation would have to receive as much attention as plan preparation.

## **PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE**

The Program is divided into five chapters: (1) Trends and Forecasts, (2) Community Attitudes and Values, (3) Planning Studies, (4) the Plan of Conservation and Development, and (5) an Action Plan for its implementation.

### **1. TRENDS AND FORECASTS**

This initial chapter is composed of selected indicators that provide a profile of changing conditions within the City. Data was collected and analyzed on demographic changes, employment trends, and shifting community development patterns, factors that reflect the social mosaic and economic determinants of the City and which play key roles in shaping its future direction. Analysis of each factor included a general overview of historic trends and projected changes for the future. Comparisons with regional trends were also included to assess the City's evolving role and competitive position within the Housatonic Valley Region.

### **2. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

The Community Attitude Survey was conducted early during the preparation of the Program to provide one means by which the adult residents of the City could share their opinions with public officials on a variety of planning issues, including growth and development, public services,

housing, traffic, aesthetics, recreation, and tax expenditures for various government programs. The response rate was sufficient to ensure a margin of error of  $\pm 4.5\%$  at a confidence level of 95%. The findings were then interspersed throughout the Program's planning studies where appropriate to provide policy guidance and to underscore plan recommendations.

### **3. PLANNING STUDIES**

Planning studies were conducted for nine planning issues and two districts: land development, economic development, environmental protection, housing, historic preservation, parks and open space, public facilities and utilities, transportation, state and regional planning, and the urban core and west side districts.

Each of these planning studies included a description of existing conditions, an assessment of needs, the identification of key issues, and the development of strategies to achieve community objectives. Wherever appropriate, principles and standards were established to guide officials in the preparation of project plans, programs, and regulations. A selected bibliography was included for each component.

### **4. THE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Plan of Conservation and Development is the planning component of the Program, designed to set direction, guide development, and define expectations for future government action. It is presented in resolution format and contains a vision statement and sub-plans for each of the planning issues and districts. Each sub-plan contains a set of goals, policies and recommendations designed to address key issues identified in related sections of the Planning Studies chapter.

Because the Plan is presented as part of a broader program, the planning studies are not contained within the Plan resolution, but only included by reference. In this way, the "policies, goals and standards" prescribed in the state statutes are clearly highlighted in one document to prevent confusion with other aspects of the Program. The Plan remains foremost a statement of community aspirations and intended government actions.

### **5. ACTION PLAN**

The Plan of Conservation and Development is implemented through the Action Plan. It is prepared and updated annually by the Mayor and consists of an Annual Planning Program for the coming fiscal year and a Five-Year Plan to distribute future tasks over time. The Annual Planning Program provides input for the City budget and an opportunity to evaluate the success of the current year in fulfilling its objectives.

The Action Plan is divided by tasks recommended within the various components of the Plan of Conservation and Development. The lead municipal agency responsible for the implementation of each task is identified along with any capital costs. Work tasks are then distributed within a timetable for implementation.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

A variety of methods were instituted to help ensure that the general public would have the broadest possible opportunity to influence development policies of the City. The Community Attitude Survey was one method of ascertaining public opinion on a variety of issues relating to community development, public services, and priorities for government action. The results provided an important guide for the establishment of planning goals, policies and recommendations.

Other methods were also employed. A multitude of knowledgeable citizens and experts were interviewed throughout the preparation of the Program. A Plan Review Committee, composed of community leaders and stakeholders, was created to review and make recommendations on draft copies of various sections of the Plan as they were completed.

The draft Plan was then presented to Common Council for review and comment. Council went an extra step by holding public hearings on the proposed Plan before making a recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission then held open work sessions and its own public hearings on the Plan prior to adoption in its final form, effective March 1, 2002.

## **MAJOR PLANNING THEMES**

Although the Plan of Conservation and Development is divided into eleven sub-plans to meet state requirements, five major themes emerge relating to (1) growth and development, (2) the environment and open space, (3) urban design, (4) public improvements, and (5) state and regional planning. Some of the major recommendations relating to each of these themes are included below.

### **MANAGING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Concentrate future commercial, industrial, and medium to high-density residential development in the urban core and within the urban development area, as designated on Plan maps.
- Where applicable, rezone stable single family neighborhoods now located within multi-family zones to appropriate single family zoning districts.
- Consider creation of a planned unit development zoning district.
- Maintain the supply of land zoned for light industrial and corporate office use, as designated on Plan maps.
- Combine the Planning and Zoning Commissions to enhance coordination between the land use policies of the City and the Zoning Regulations.
- Initiate an economic development program.

### **PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND PRESERVING OPEN SPACE**

- Encourage the amendment of state enabling legislation to allow municipalities to adopt regulations to protect major woodlands from unnecessary and indiscriminate clearcutting.
- Create an overlay zoning district to protect hillsides and ridgelines.
- Pursue federal and state funding to identify, investigate and determine clean-up costs of brownfield sites in the City.

- Complete the proposed acquisition of land and the development of the *Outdoor Environmental Education Laboratory*.
- Acquire additional property for the Tarrywile Park ‘Wilderness Area,’ and construct the inter-municipal Ives Trail.
- Acquire additional parcels of land for the creation or expansion of public parks (e.g. Wooster Mountain State Park, Bear Mountain, West Side Natural Area, and Blind Brook park).

## **IMPROVING URBAN DESIGN**

- Prepare and promote the use of architectural and urban design guidelines for the downtown.
- Investigate the appropriateness of creating a ‘Village District’ in the Zoning Regulations for the Main Street Historic District.
- Undertake streetscape improvements for Main Street from Wooster Street to South Street as part of the program for the Main Street South Revitalization Area.
- Amend the Zoning Regulations to strengthen site plan review governing overall site design, parking lots, landscaping, and signs for development along commercial highways.
- Institute design standards that promote crime prevention in buildings and on sites.
- Include the identification of archaeological sites as part of the site plan review process.

## **COMPLETING MAJOR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS**

- Acquire and restore the Palace Theater as a center for the performing arts.
- Construct a new parking garage in the downtown.
- Construct the ‘West Side Sewer Interceptor.’
- Expand the capacities of the West Lake and Margerie Lake Reservoirs.
- Acquire land on the West Side campus of the Western Connecticut State University for construction of a magnet school.
- Undertake a variety of road improvement projects, including the widening of I-84, US Route 7, and portions of Mill Plain Road, Newtown Road, North Street, Padanaram Road, and Kenosia Avenue.

## **PROMOTING STATE AND REGIONAL PLANNING**

- Promote “smart growth” amendments to the Connecticut General Statutes that will strengthen and modernize municipal and regional planning and zoning efforts.
- Promote a strategy for all towns in the Housatonic Valley Region to provide for their fair share of affordable housing based on regional need.
- Advocate improvements to create an ‘inland corridor’ from New York to Boston by widening I-684 and I-84 to at least six lanes through congested urban areas.
- Support efforts to develop a high-speed rail system to connect the Tri-State Metropolitan Area with other major centers of the nation.
- Support the expansion of air service at Stewart Airport.
- Advocate greater coordination of planning efforts at the state, regional and metropolitan level, including the creation of an interstate transportation commission for the Tri-State Metropolitan Area.

## CONCLUSION

The Plan of Conservation and Development has enough flexibility to address changing priorities while still retaining an underlying foundation of purpose and direction. Nevertheless, adoption of the Plan alone will not guarantee its ultimate success. While city planning can provide a vision of the future, an assessment of needs and available resources, and recommendations for future action, its ultimate success will depend upon a community-wide commitment without which no single plan, no matter how well designed, can fully succeed. In the final analysis, successful city planning requires the confidence to act rather than simply react to change, and summons all of us to express, in our deeds as well as our words, the will and the determination to shape the future of our City. ☆

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*March 1, 2002*

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